

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

out the year 4,000 workers came to France. The original year's contracts were prolonged and the workers placed under military discipline.

Workers received the local French wage, though the government withheld a portion to indemnify the cost of clothing and transportation.

There was no trouble with the first recruits who came from Indo-Chinese towns where they were used to contact with Europeans, but later, peasants were sent, timid, suspicious, and unprepared for their new life. Bonuses were given to stimulate zeal: part of their salary was extracted and sent back to the workers' families; glowing letters were reproduced in the colony's papers. The kind of work was given Annamites in which they could see results almost immediately.

Paternalistic attempts were made to counteract the Annamites' natural melancholia, aggravated by homesickness: reading-rooms, lectures and lessons in French, theatricals, etc.

By 1918 there were about 100,000 Annamites in France, half of whom

were workers. The military authorities had at first been chary about

using Annamite soldiers at the Front, but after Verdun they were

forced to spare the French troops. First mixed detachments, then all-

Annamite regiments were created—the Cambodians were placed with

the Senegalese and not with the Annamites. The valiant behaviour of

these troops was evident at their first engagement in 1917 at Chemin-

les-Dames. The qualities they revealed were courage, intelligence,

endurance, discipline, resignation, avarice, and a zeal for military

decorations. The greatest difficulty lay in their concern for ritual burial.

If these soldiers had been volunteers in reality as well as in name

their sacrifice would have been less tragic, but colonial recruiters used

reprehensible methods and violence. There had been lamentable scenes in the villages and stations where these miserable "volunteers" were herded together and put under military guard. Some even jumped overboard from the transport ships in a pathetic effort to escape back home. Money contributions suffered from the same abuse, but in that *case* the damage was not so vital. The sacrifice demanded was far beyond the colony's strength. The War did not concern the Indo-Chinese. Fiance had promised to protect them, but this contract was uniktteraL Despite the assimUatioiHSt theory the Annamites had not been morally assimilated. Their participation in the War was nothing more nor less than forced labour. Nor were the liberal promises France made to the colonies in her hour of need fulfilled. The native discontent that piled up in tjie post-War decade was only a fitting retribution. **lade-China's** marked prosperity and isolation during the War in-